

from Wood Esq. 4
from his affectionate Brother
The Author

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
PAROCHIAL COMMITTEES
At BATH,
ON THE PROPRIETY OF
Incorporating their several Parishes
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
A HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

ADVERTISEMENT.

*AT Vestry Meetings held for the
parishes of Saint Peter and Paul, Saint James,
Saint Michael, Lyncomb and Widcomb, and
Bathwick, on Thursday the 1st, and Friday
the 2d, of February 1798;*

*Mr. WOOD having complied with the
unanimous request of the Committees, that he
would publish his Address delivered at the
said meetings;*

*Ordered, That the same be printed and
distributed among the Parishioners.*

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO

THE COMMITTEES

OF

THE SEVERAL PARISHES OF

St. Peter and Paul, St. James, St. Michael, Lyncomb and Widcomb, and Bathwick.

MET TO DELIBERATE

UPON THE PROPRIETY OF INCORPORATING

FOR THE

BETTER RELIEF AND EMPLOYMENT

OF

THE POOR,

BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

An HOUSE of INDUSTRY.

By J. WOOD,

A DIRECTOR OF THE SHREWSBURY HOUSE.

BATH, PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL;

AND SOLD BY

C. DILLY, POULTRY, LONDON.

1798.

350094
Peyton

TO
CHARLES PHILLOTT, Esq.

MAYOR OF BATH,

WITH AN ARDENT WISH,
(PROMPTED BY A CONVICTION OF ITS GENERAL UTILITY)

THAT HIS MAYORALTY MAY BE DISTINGUISHED

IN THE
ANNALS OF THIS CELEBRATED CITY,

BY THE DETERMINATION

TO ESTABLISH A

HOUSE OF INDUSTRY

IN ADDITION

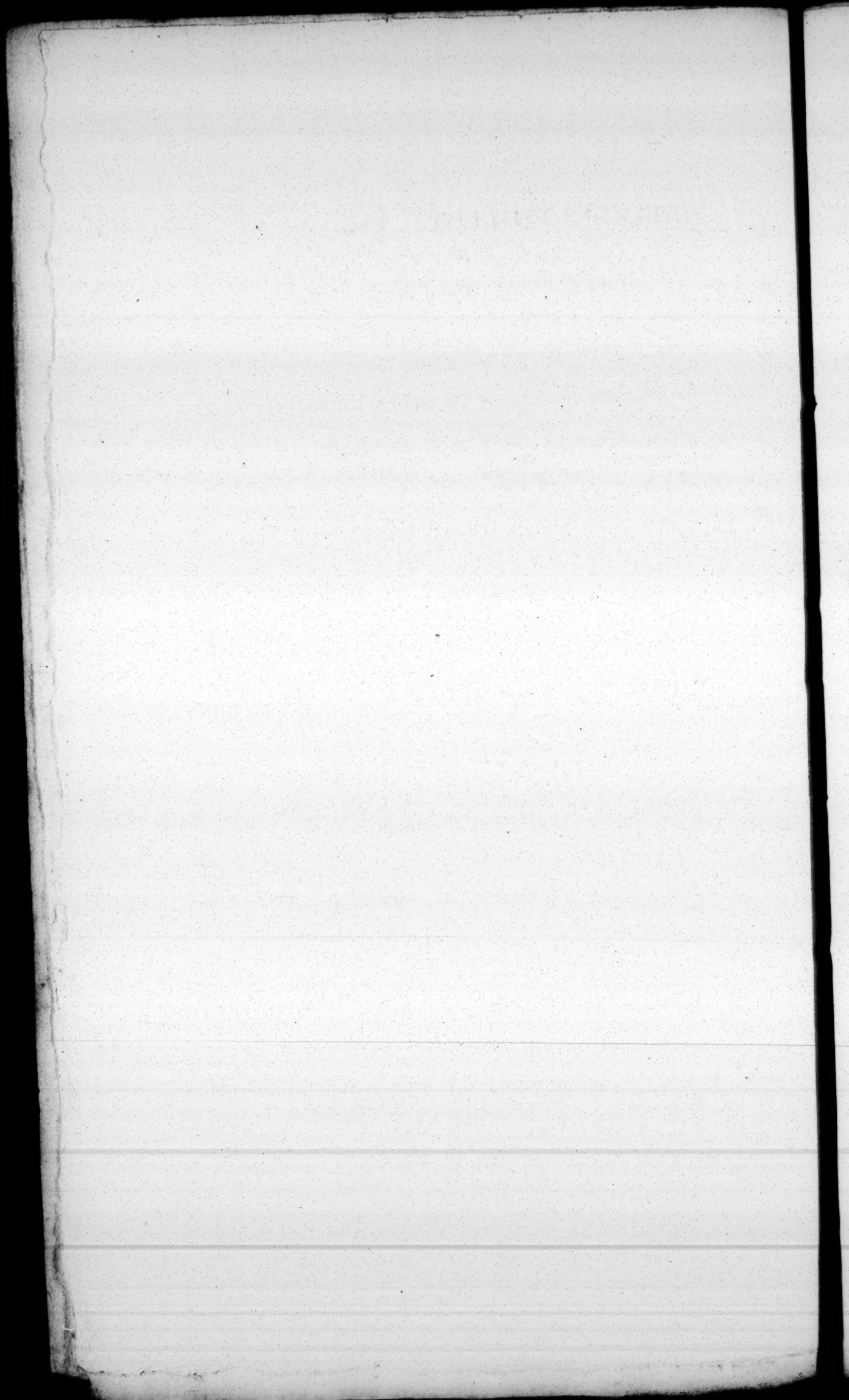
TO ITS OTHER NUMEROUS AND VALUABLE INSTITUTIONS:

THIS PUBLICATION IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS MOST OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.





AN

ADDRESS, &c.

IT is much to the credit of the mild and benevolent spirit of our laws, that this kingdom is the only country in the world where a legal provision is made for the relief of the poor. And the attention of the legislature has been frequently employed, from the days of Queen Elizabeth to our own times, in endeavouring to guard that provision from those abuses to which it has been found exposed. The great point in view was so to regulate this relief, that it should not be diverted from its original purpose—the assistance of industrious and deserving objects, when reduced to real distress; or perverted so as to become a temptation to idleness, and a bounty applicable to the purposes of profligacy and dissipation. But this desirable object is far from being yet obtained; and so long as it is not in the power of those to whom the relief of the poor is committed to furnish

nish them with employment, the abuses of the parochial aid will not only inevitably continue, but increase with their increasing depravity, until the burden of the parochial taxes becomes too heavy and grievous to be any longer borne. It was this conviction that led to the establishment of HOUSES OF INDUSTRY. All the attempts made to furnish this employment in the parochial work-houses, under the superintendence of annual officers, have uniformly miscarried. It is necessary to success, that a permanent plan should be adopted and pursued, under the direction and superintendence of a permanent and respectable BOARD of MANAGERS; and this constitutes the leading feature of these establishments.

The benefits that we at Shrewsbury have found from the adoption of this plan, are many and important.

The poor received into the house, who remain capable of labour, are all employed in the way best adapted to their degree of strength or former occupations. They are hereby made to contribute towards the expence of their support; the indolent become accustomed to labour, the intemperate to sobriety, the profligate to decency and decorum. A preventative is also furnished for those evils that are so generally to be met with in the common parochial receptacles, from the want of employment, from the promiscuous

promiscuous intercourse of the sexes unrestrained by any discipline or superintendence, and from the fatal effects which the licentious manners and discourse of the older poor have upon the minds of the young brought up with them. The poor in a House of Industry are classed; the boys and girls, the men and women, dine at separate tables, and sleep in separate apartments, the latter of which—their dormitories—have no communication with each other.

The mode adopted of relieving large families by taking a part of the children into the house, has also been found, by experience, to be productive of the happiest effects. The children, thus admitted, are trained up to habits of industry and virtue. The parents still find it necessary to labour diligently for the support of themselves, and those of their remaining offspring that it appears to the board they may by such labour provide for and support. At the same time, the children taken into the house enjoy those advantages, and early acquire those habits, which are adapted to render them *useful*, instead of *burdensome* members of the community. These benefits will appear in a more striking point of view, when contrasted with the situation in which the families of the poor are *generally* placed in our cities and populous towns. Their habitations are the sinks of filth, profligacy, and vice; the morals of the children are early contaminated

contaminated by evil communications and bad examples; lying is the first lesson of their tongues, and theft too often the first exercise of their hands; every object they see is at war with decency, and every impression they receive is a vice. On the other hand, when the parents, on account of their numerous progeny, are allowed large weekly pay, the money is too commonly squandered away in intemperance, and the poor children are left destitute of that sustenance necessary for their support.

With respect to another, and from increasing profligacy a pretty numerous class of infant poor, those natural children who are thrown upon the parish from their birth; such an establishment must appear upon a moment's reflection to be peculiarly desirable; and that by their education in such a well-regulated seminary, they stand a much fairer chance of becoming valuable members of society, and of filling up their future stations and relations in life, with credit to themselves and honour to their parochial guardians. But the benefits of these institutions are not confined within the walls of the respective edifices. By the natural operation of the regulations that have been adopted, a powerful check has been interposed to that shameful abuse of the parochial provision, which has been so long complained of, and has produced that enormous increase of the
 poor's-

poor's-rates, which is now become an evil of the first magnitude, and in many places, almost insupportable. The Out-Poor can no longer extort relief by false pretences, and the parochial aid is confined to those cases of real distress, *for* which alone it was originally intended, and *to* which alone it ought, in justice to those who are obliged to contribute to this fund, to be applied. All these circumstances united, are admirably adapted gradually to introduce an important and very beneficial change in the conduct and morals of the poor in general, and thus to *combine* those most desirable advantages, which, if *separately* pursued, must be obtained by sacrifices abhorrent to every humane and benevolent mind.

For, desirable as it will be to lighten the heavy burden of the parochial taxes, this pecuniary benefit would be much too dearly purchased, if the comfort, the health, or the lives of the poor, were the price at which only it could be obtained. But, holding out employment to the poor; assisting large families, by undertaking the care and support of a due proportion of their offspring; removing these from those wretched abodes of filth and profligacy, where they lay exposed to every natural as well as moral evil; appointing them proper instructors, and training them up in the habits of industry and virtue; withholding undeserved relief from the artful impostor,

impostor, who applies it solely to vicious gratifications and intemperate indulgencies; and thereby securing a more ample fund for the assistance of those in real distress;—these are regulations that contribute as much to ameliorate the condition of the poor themselves, as to exonerate those who are now ready to sink under the heavy and increasing load of parochial assessments.

It deserves too the most serious consideration, that any further advance of this tax would only effect a *transfer* of misery; and reduce many honest, industrious, and worthy members of society, to the same situation with those for whose benefit the tax is imposed; and when many such instances occur, they will at the same time increase greatly the parochial expenditure, and reduce the number of those by whom the whole charge must be defrayed. It should seem, therefore, that such a vigorous effort is now loudly demanded by the imperious voice of necessity, and can no longer be with safety delayed.

In this statement of the benefits that may result from these establishments, I have studiously avoided enumerating any that may appear of a visionary, a chimerical, or even of a doubtful nature. It may be proper, however, upon the present occasion, when you are met to deliberate upon an object of so great magnitude and importance, to state those objections
which

which have been brought by public writers against these establishments; with such remarks upon them, by way of reply, as are the result, not of speculative ideas, but of that practical knowledge and observation, which my situation as a Director of one of these Institutions has furnished me with.

Before I proceed to these, I will beg leave briefly to premise, that it appears to me, from the very nature of the object in view, many difficulties must inevitably be encountered, and many objections will naturally present themselves, to every plan that can be proposed or attempted for effecting so desirable and beneficial an amendment. It only remains, therefore, upon mature deliberation, to adopt that which lies open to the fewest of such difficulties or objections, and which affords advantages so weighty and important as abundantly to overbalance them.

The principal objections stated by those writers to whom I have alluded, are the following:—

They alledge, that where the poor are *crouded* together (as they choose to represent it) in these houses, the effect must be prejudicial to their health.

Now I conceive, that upon a fair examination and enquiry it will be found, that an effect the very reverse of that stated in this objection has been produced. When proper attention is paid to the construction of the edifice, and to the cleanliness of its inhabitants,

inhabitants, so far are these receptacles from generating disease, or increasing mortality among the poor, that they contribute greatly to promote or re-establish their health. In those narrow alleys and miserable dwellings, where the poor congregate in our cities and large towns, the circulation of pure air is impeded, or it is impregnated with noxious, putrid effluvia; and within doors, a still greater stagnation or corruption of this vital fluid takes place. The pale countenances and squalid appearance of the wretched inhabitants, undeniably evince the injurious effects that result from this general cause.

Let us turn now from the contemplation of so disgusting a scene, to the examination of a well-built and well-regulated House of Industry. Its occupiers are supplied with wholesome food; thoroughly purified on their admission, the rules of the House compel them to cleanliness; they eat, they sleep, they work, in large and lofty apartments, kept thoroughly clean and well ventilated. When taken ill, they are removed to a building far enough detached to prevent all danger of infection. There they are attended by nurses, have due medical assistance, and a diet adapted to their complaints. Is it possible that *such* houses should be unhealthy, or contribute to the mortality of their inhabitants? Can it be supposed that the poor are *more* liable to disease here, than in
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the miserable abodes before described? Can you believe, what one of these writers asserts, that “ they
 “ are dreadful slaughter-houses to the old, and kill at
 “ least four or five times as many of the young as
 “ would otherwise die in the same compass of time?”

Rather let me ask, will not the plain and simple comparison I have just stated convince you, that the wild and unqualified assertions of these gentlemen can have no foundation in fact; that their heated imaginations have conjured up a phantom which exists nowhere but in their disturbed and busy fancies; and which serves only to mark how far men may be misled by groundless prejudices, hastily adopted, and obstinately retained. But it is proper that this misrepresentation should be confuted by express and decisive data; and I pledge myself for the exact, unexaggerated truth of those that follow.

In a year of the greatest mortality I ever knew in the Shrewsbury House of Industry, the average number of poor in the house was 340, and the number of deaths 29. Now fairly and impartially to decide the question, whether this establishment be really prejudicial to the health of the poor? it will be necessary to analyse this little bill of mortality, and that will at the same time serve to convince you, how little dependance is to be placed upon *general* conclusions drawn from *particular* facts, not
 fully

fully and fairly investigated. Of the twenty-nine paupers who died in that one year, two were ninety years old each, three eighty, ten upwards of seventy, five fell victims to venereal habits, one died of a cancer, one a maniac, and one a poor vagrant who had been ill-treated in a country parish.

Can it now be truly said, that any of these twenty-three, out of the twenty-nine, died in consequence of their being confined in the House of Industry? Let it be remembered also, that these, in common with all other parochial receptacles, are the last rendezvous of the aged and the distempered poor. *Here* the wretched victims of profligacy and disease are conveyed in the concluding stages of their miserable career; and *here* they resort, to lie down and die.—It ought also to be taken into the account, that a still greater number than those twenty-nine I have stated, were recovered from the maladies they brought with them, in consequence of that assistance and those comforts they experienced; and were restored to their habitations or former employments, with renovated health.

It was admitted by the writer I have quoted, after his former objection was unanswerably confuted by the facts just stated, that “no fair comparison could be instituted, but with respect to the *children*,” and here, the advantage in favour of our establishment

ment was decisive indeed!—for, out of ninety-one children born in the house, *two* only had died there, *two* others out at nurse, (all at the age of two months) and *three* more, after they had been taken out of the house, at the age of three or four years. This gentleman was called upon to assign a reason why the children born in the house should be *less* liable to death than those of the poor in their own dwellings; and whence it came to pass that so many *more* lives had been saved in proportion among the *former* than among the *latter*?—but he chose to evade the question.

Another objection that has been urged against Houses of Industry has likewise originated in pre-conceived prejudice, and a total ignorance of the practice that prevails at their Weekly Boards. The cruelty of compelling the poor to abandon their own dwellings, of thus destroying all the tender sympathies of social and domestic life, and all the endearing affinities of parent and child, sister and brother, has been dwelt upon with much pathetic eloquence—eloquence that no man of feeling and humanity could, or ought to resist, if the fact were as these objectors have stated it. Thus to compel the poor *generally* to quit their own dwellings, and reside in these Houses, would indeed be cruelty in the extreme; but this is by no means the case.

For

For the aged poor, wholly incapable of labouring for their support, or taking proper care of themselves, a well-conducted House of Industry is indeed a most comfortable asylum, where they are treated with tenderness, and assisted by nurses appointed for the apartments in which they are placed. Yet, even with respect to this class of the poor, we discriminate; and where they have children or friends disposed to take proper care of them, and are arrived at the decline of a life spent in honest industry, we frequently allow that aid to their friends, which enables them to pass the evening of their days in *those* dwellings, and *that* society, which long habit and tender connections have endeared to them. These are cases, however, which in our cities and populous towns do not very frequently occur; for the poor, struggling with misfortune, worn *down* by incessant labour, or worn *out* by intemperance and debauchery, seldom live out more than half their days.

I have already stated how peculiarly eligible and desirable these receptacles are, for natural children thrown upon the parish by their *unnatural* parents; and for those also, whom the labour of their parents cannot maintain. With respect to the latter, we allow of mutual intercourse with their parents, and they may spend their holidays at home; the separation, therefore, is in fact but little more than that which

which takes place when children of a superior rank are boarded at a school. There remains only one other class of the poor, namely, those who are not constantly burdensome to the parish, but yet stand in need of *occasional* relief when visited with sickness or other unavoidable distress. To these we do not refuse this temporary aid at their own dwellings. In cases of sickness they are attended by the Apothecary of the House, supplied with proper medicines, and allowed liberal assistance in money or provisions, in proportion to their real exigencies. And so greatly is the expenditure on the Out-Poor diminished by the effectual check given to fraud and imposition, that relief is administered to all those occasional applicants, who are real objects, upon a larger scale than was ever wont to be done by the annual officers.

To the *general* objections, stated by those who have written against these establishments, may be added others, which may present themselves to the minds of those who are favourably disposed towards them, but alarmed at the magnitude of the objects to be grasped by such as embark in similar undertakings.

To furnish employment for the great body of the parochial poor, it may be said, will

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prove a very laborious and hazardous undertaking.

Certain it is, that it will require vigorous exertions, particularly at the outset; and you must not deceive yourselves, by imagining that the beneficial effects these establishments are capable of producing, can ever be obtained or continued, without the exercise of a constant, steady, and vigorous superintendence and controul, on the part of the Directors.—Nevertheless, by adopting proper regulations, conducting the business of the house methodically, and allotting regular seasons for the discharge of every branch of a Director's duty, matters may be so ordered, that a due attendance for about three hours once a week at the Board, and a couple of hours any other day on the respective Committees, into which the Body of Directors will find it advantageous to divide themselves, will, in general, be all the time that it will be requisite for them to devote to the discharge of the duties appertaining to their important office. And what man is there, possessed of the least spark of public spirit, who would not cheerfully make so small a sacrifice, to promote in so high a degree, the welfare of that portion of the community to which his situation attaches him?

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His immediate reward will be, that heartfelt delight and exultation which will arise from the consciousness of being so usefully employed.

With respect to the numbers of the poor for whom it will be necessary to provide employment; this difficulty, which appears so formidable in the distant view, you will find to be greatly diminished when actually encountered. Some time ago, I undertook the management of a very liberal subscription entered into by the inhabitants of Shrewsbury, for the purpose of supplying the poor with provisions at half price. On that occasion, I directed books to be opened, in which were regularly entered the names of all the poor who applied for the benefit of this benevolent contribution, together with the number of individuals which each family contained. I was thereby enabled to ascertain, that the number of poor within the town amounted to between five and six thousand; and if to this be added the poor of our united parishes residing in the adjacent country, the total may fairly be estimated at seven thousand. Yet out of this large body, the number of those taken into the House of Industry has never at any one time amounted to four hundred; and of these, nearly one-third are little children, too young to be taken into the working-rooms. The number, therefore, of those for whom

we have found it necessary to provide employment, is very small indeed, when compared with the total number of our parochial poor. This may be thought surprising; but the fact is, that the great body of our poor, now finding that their idle excuses are of no avail, and that those who are able must work or starve, have chosen rather to work for themselves than for the House of Industry. And they have found also, that those who are disposed to work, will seldom stand in need of employment. I admit, that the case may occasionally be different in manufacturing towns during a temporary stagnation of trade.

I can recollect but one objection more.—It may be argued, that, *in point of expence*, it will be the same thing to the parish, whether the children in large families are maintained in the house, or supported by weekly pay. A recital of the heads of a petition, presented by the town of Shrewsbury to the House of Commons, on occasion of the late Poor's-Bill, will, I conceive, furnish a full and satisfactory answer to this objection.

It is stated, in this authentic document, “ that in the purchase of the necessary lands, buildings, implements, and machinery, for our House of Industry, there had been expended near eight thousand pounds. That by means of this establishment, the aged and infirm

infirm poor had been comfortably provided for; the young trained up in habits of industry and decency; a stop had been put to the great frauds and abuses that prevailed in the parochial expenditure; and those poor who had laboured under temporary distress or disability, had been more liberally assisted and relieved in their own dwellings, than had before been found practicable. That, while the poor themselves had derived these important benefits from this institution, the petitioners had also been very considerably relieved from the heavy and growing burden of the parochial taxes. That the poor-rates for those united parishes had, ever since the commencement of that undertaking, been reduced upwards of one-third; and that the amount of that reduction, in the term of twelve years subsequent to that establishment, was nineteen thousand three hundred and fifteen pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence. That this very considerable reduction had taken place, notwithstanding the farther charge of more than two thousand pounds upon the said rates, for the erection of bridges thrown down by violent inundations, the maintenance of the families of men serving in the militia, and the parochial levies for the army and navy. That the petitioners were well convinced these combined and inestimable advantages had arisen from the good management of the Board
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of Directors, appointed under the authority of the special act granted for that establishment; that the qualifications required had rendered that Board respectable; the number of Directors secured the advantage of combined judgment and due deliberation, effectually prevented the abuse and oppression of the poor, and, from the particular form of their constitution, enabled them to act with the advantage of practical knowledge and experience in the duties of their office. The petitioners therefore prayed for a total exemption from the operation of the pending bill."

I fear I have already trespassed too long upon your patience; yet it seems necessary that I should lay before you the remarks which have occurred to me, on the examination of those accounts transmitted by your respective Committees.

It appears from these accounts, that the total annual expenditure for the relief of the poor in the five parishes which propose to unite, is 4891*l.* 6*s.* 5*d.* That in the parish of St. James the *out-poor* cost the parish the last year 1174*l.* 14*s.* 6½*d.*; that in the parish of St. Michael the annual expenditure for the *out-poor* was 717*l.* 5*s.* 4*d.* For the parish of St. Peter and Paul, there is no account stated of the separate expence of the in and out-poor, but the *total* expenditure is about a hundred pounds
more

more than St. Michael's. It may therefore be presumed, that the expenditure for the out-poor will not be over-rated, if taken at the same sum with St. Michael's, namely 717*l.* 5*s.* 4*d.* The total expenditure for Lyncomb and Widcomb is almost exactly one-half the amount of that for St. Peter and Paul; I have taken, therefore, one half of the sum set down for the expenditure on the *out-poor* in the latter parish, which amounts to 358*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* the *total* expenditure in Bathwick is 239*l.* 10*s.* 9*d.* or about one-fifth of the *total* expenditure in St. Michael's; I have taken, therefore, one-fifth of the expenditure for the *out-poor* in the parish of St. Michael, namely 143*l.* 9*s.* If these sums are added together, it will be found, that, according to these data, the total expenditure on the *out-poor* of the five parishes for the last year, amounted to 3111*l.* 6*s.* 10½*d.* In this branch of the parochial expenditure, I conceive that it may reasonably be expected a very material saving may take place.

At Shrewsbury, we have six parishes incorporated, and the *total* annual expenditure the year before the establishment of our House of Industry, amounted to 4605*l.* 3*s.* 1½*d.*; which is very near to the sum expended last year in your five parishes, the difference being only 286*l.* 3*s.* 3½*d.*; yet last year, our expenditure for the relief of the *out-poor* did not amount

to

to 500*l.* and in this sum is included both the occasional relief, and the pay allowed for children at nurse. We also received in the same year from the parents of bastard children, 199*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.* Conceiving that it might be objected our receipts on this account might be particularly large for this year, I took out of the books the sums received under this head for the four last years, and the average annual sum so received was 187*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*; this sum, therefore, may be fairly set against the amount of our relief to the out-poor.

I am aware that it may be said, this extraordinary saving must have been effected by being too parsimonious in our relief; and I can only oppose *generally* to this objection, my solemn asseveration, that this has not been the case. But when we descend to particulars, it will not appear so very extraordinary. Our regulations, as I have before observed, have effectually checked those frauds and impositions which so much swell the parochial expenditure. Instead of allowing out-pay to large families, we relieve them by taking a part of their children into the house; where, until they can maintain themselves by their labour, the expence of that maintenance is undoubtedly an additional charge upon the parishes, that would otherwise come under the denomination of out-pay. A considerable

considerable saving in favour of the parishes is also effected, by the out-poor being attended in time of sickness, and supplied with medicines, by the apothecary of the house. The fact therefore is, that this important diminution in our expenditure on the out-poor, has been effected by the joint operation of all these several causes; and also by the necessity our parochial poor now find themselves under of contributing by their own industry, in a fair and reasonable proportion, for the support of their families.

The interest of the money borrowed to purchase our building, &c. makes undoubtedly an additional article in our annual expenditure; as, likewise, the salaries of the apothecary, steward, and matron. The sums stated in our accounts, as paid for hired labour in the manufactory, will be reimbursed out of the profits of that work, whatever it be, in which the poor are to be employed; and, therefore, are not to be considered as adding to the parochial charge. And with respect to the salaries also, it will be remembered, that the allowances you now pay in your separate workhouses, or parishes, to your apothecaries and governors, will all be done away; and if the charges for medicines and attendance upon the sick-poor in the several parishes be taken into the account, the balance may possibly be in favour of the new establishment.

Without

Without very bad management, indeed, a very considerable diminution of expence will also naturally take place, from uniting the poor of your several workhouses into one family, where they will all be provided for together. And after every deduction, you have seen, by the Shrewsbury petition, that in twelve years, a very noble balance of upwards of twenty thousand pounds has arisen in favour of the parishes.

But the important business which is the subject of your present deliberations, is not a mere question of *profit and loss*. Every enlarged mind, every worthy citizen, and every good man, will carry his ideas much farther. And if he is convinced that these establishments are calculated to produce *general* good, to remove those evils, and strike at the root of that depravity, which no man will be hardy enough to deny do exist among the poor; such a conviction will dispose him to overlook every trifling *local* objection, to rise superior to every weak and timid apprehension, and, with ardent philanthropy, to seize the only opportunity that, perhaps, may ever be afforded him, of contributing, by his zealous support and exertions, to promote, in the first instance, the true interest, welfare, and happiness of so large a portion of his fellow-citizens, and ultimately, the prosperity of his country.

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There was a general act passed for the incorporation of parishes, with a view to the maintenance and employment of the poor, in the 22d year of the present reign; but the objections that lie against an incorporation under that act are these:—The care and management of the poor is still to be vested in Annual Officers, and whether such managers be denominated overseers or guardians, is very little to the purpose; all the inconveniences of the present system will certainly attach to the new one. The power of these annual guardians is subject to the same limitations with that of the present overseers. They are subjected to the controul of a visitor. The admission and relief of paupers is still left to the discretion of an individual guardian. No other description of paupers can be sent to the poor-house, but the old, sick, and infirm, orphan children, or those that go with their mothers for sustenance. Idle and disorderly persons remain in the same situation as they were placed in by the general code of poor laws, and over these the guardians have no controul. The *quantum* of relief to be allowed, in each particular case, is still left to the discretion of an individual magistrate, who, amid the various business that calls for his attention, cannot be supposed to have leisure to examine minutely into the merits of each such case; whose humanity is often imposed upon
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by the artful frauds and misrepresentations of the paupers, and who would undoubtedly be glad to consign so troublesome and disagreeable a part of the duties of his office, to a board of respectable Directors, by whom there can be no danger of its being abused, and the nature of whose office enables them to decide upon each application, on fuller and more satisfactory grounds.

I have been desired to direct my attention, particularly, to the subject of the proportions which each parish shall contribute to the total expenditure of the whole, when incorporated.

Not having time for mature deliberation, I can only throw out the following hints, which may be afterwards more fully considered. This business, like many others, which appear involved and intricate at the first glance, may be fairly unravelled by a little patient investigation.

Peculiar, local circumstances, seem to render it necessary to have recourse to a peculiar mode of adjusting these proportions; but there can be no doubt, when all are disposed to concur in equitable terms, that this point may also be settled to mutual satisfaction, and provision may be made in the act, that at any time hereafter, when any very material alteration has taken place in the relative situation of any of the parishes, a fresh settlement of these proportionate payments

payments shall take place, to be awarded by impartial arbitrators.

The idea that occurs to me for the first adjustment is this:—That each parish shall pay that sum per head for the maintenance of their paupers *in the house*, which is actually expended in such maintenance. That a separate account shall be kept for each parish of the sums disbursed for their respective paupers, in *out-pay and occasional relief*, which shall likewise be separately accounted for by each parish. And that, with respect to articles of *general* expenditure, such as interest of money, &c. each parish shall contribute in proportion to the comparative amount of their respective disbursements for in and out-poor. Or, if it should be thought that one parish may probably be more benefited by the incorporation of the whole than another, *that* parish shall make such moderate addition to their proportional payment for articles of *general* expenditure, as shall be amicably adjusted and agreed upon.

It does not appear to me that an enquiry into the age, sex, and employment of the *present set* of out-poor relieved, furnishes any proper criterion by which to judge of the advantages to be derived from the establishment of a House of Industry. In all these respects, the description of the paupers maintained by the parish, both in and out of the house, must be
liable

liable to continual variation. Yet, even from the statement given in the report of St. Michael's committee, strong conclusions may be fairly drawn in favour of such an establishment. It appears that they have at present upon their books one hundred individuals relieved by weekly pay; that the average number of these, for the last six years, has been one hundred and four, and that the expenditure for their relief amounted the last year to 717l. 5s. 4d. Can there be a more striking proof adduced, of the *pecuniary* advantage that may reasonably be expected to result from the establishment of a House of Industry? The *out-poor* for the parish of St. Michael *only* cost them 6l. 18s. per head per annum, amounting to 717l. 5s. 4d. a sum making two-fifths more than the expenditure on the out-poor for all the six united parishes at Shrewsbury put together. At the same time, let it be remembered, that the *total* expenditure at Shrewsbury, *the year before the establishment of this House of Industry*, was only 286l. 3s. 3½d. less than the *total* expenditure for the five parishes proposing to unite.

It seems necessary to notice a little oversight, that has (unintentionally I am fully persuaded) crept into the statement contained in the postscript to the Report of Saint Michael's Committee.

It

It is there observed, that “ it appears from the Shrewsbury Account, printed for the year 1794, that the manufactured goods sold, amounted to 1224l. and the sums disbursed for raw materials, &c. to 1174l. so that there had been a profit of 50l. beyond the clothing supplied to the house.” In this statement the gentlemen have overlooked those items in that account, by which it appears that the stock of manufactured goods and raw materials, remaining upon hand, amounted to 908l. 18s. 10d.

I mean not, by this observation, to encourage the expectation of a large profit (particularly at the outset) upon any manufactory that may be established; but it appears to me, from a comparison of the Bath expenditure with that at Shrewsbury, that *a saving may be made, more than equivalent to the interest of the money it may be necessary to borrow, so that no advance of the present poor's-rate in the respective parishes will be required.*

And if the sums borrowed are made transferable, like turnpike securities, the debt may remain without much disadvantage, until it can be discharged with perfect convenience. It will be recollected, that at Shrewsbury, the poor's-rates have been from the first year very materially *reduced*, instead of increased, notwithstanding the sum annually paid for the interest of the money borrowed.

I cannot

I cannot conceive that in the city of Bath, (where every publick institution is so well conducted) any real difficulty can arise, in providing fifteen Directors properly qualified for that employment. After the first year, only one will be required annually for each parish.

At the same time that I deem it necessary to state these observations for your further consideration, I desire to do that justice which is undeniably due to St. Michael's Committee, for the great pains they have taken in framing their report. And, should you proceed in this business, I have met with no person whose assistance will be of more use in framing the act that will be required, than the gentleman who has taken a very active part in that Committee, and who has, with great liberality and publick spirit, made a voluntary tender of his gratuitous service.

Upon inspection of the present Work-house belonging to the parishes of St. Peter and Paul and St. James, I apprehend that it may be applied to the purpose of a HOUSE OF INDUSTRY; with an additional building for the dining-hall, working-rooms, and general dormitories, &c. By adopting this plan, the expence of building will be very much reduced.

Upon

Upon the whole, from the premises I have thus laid before your respectable Committees, it should seem to follow, that, if it be desirable to correct those evils which result from the present system of the poor's-laws; to counteract those frauds and impositions which will inevitably attach to the parochial provision, until you are able to hold out employment to the poor; and to reduce the present enormous amount of the poor's-rates;—if it be an object of importance to improve their morals, to ameliorate their condition, and gradually to introduce, among their offspring, the habits of decency, industry, and virtue, thereby training them up to be useful instead of burdensome members of the community, happy in themselves, and blessings to their country; then the general establishment of Houses of Industry, *in our cities and great towns*, is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

The following Extract is taken from the History of Worcester, published in 1796.

“To the question, Is the establishment of the House of Industry likely to reduce the poor's-rates? a worthy and vigilant Director of this laudable institution has favoured the author with the following reply:—*That* must depend on the times;* but I can

* The meaning here is, that a considerable advance in the price of the necessaries of life must naturally increase the expences of the House, and add to the amount of Out-Pay.

positively assert, from the experience already obtained, that any given number of poor will be maintained in it, cheaper and better than by any other mode of supporting the poor that has been in practice heretofore.

“ It is now little more than a year since the poor were brought into this house. Since that period it is too well-known to what an alarming price all sorts of provisions have arisen, which must necessarily increase the number of those who stand in need of relief; notwithstanding which, the poor’s rates of the united parishes have not been increased, although nearly double the number have been supported to what were before this institution took place.”

History of Worcester, vol. ii. p. 80.

It will be recollected, that at this period, corn sold from 15s. to 20s. per bushel.

Speedily will be published, by the same Author,

THE FIFTH EDITION OF

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

Shrewsbury House of Industry.

With an INTRODUCTION, containing Observations on the present Defects of the Poor Laws.
